

STRIP CASTING APPARATUS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 This is a continuation-in-part of U.S. utility patent application serial number 09/324,000, filed June 2, 1999, which claims the benefit of Australian provisional patent application No. PP 4143, filed June 17, 1998.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 This invention relates to a metal strip casting apparatus in which molten metal is brought into contact with a casting roll surface so as to solidify on that surface. More specifically, it is concerned with cleaning of the casting rolls in such casters.

15 The casting apparatus may be either a single roll caster or a twin roll caster. In a twin roll caster hot metal is introduced between a pair of contra-rotated horizontal casting rolls which are cooled so that metal shells solidify on the moving roll surfaces and are brought  
20 together at the nip between them to produce a solidified strip product at the outlet from the roll nip. The term "nip" is used herein to refer to the general region at which the rolls are closest together. The hot metal may be introduced into the nip between the rolls via a metal  
25 delivery nozzle located above the nip to form a casting pool supported on the casting roll surfaces immediately above the nip and confined at the ends of the nip by appropriate confining means such as pool side damming plates.

30 In order to prevent accumulation of metal oxides and slags or other contaminants on the roll surfaces, cleaning devices such as brushes or cleaning belts may be applied to the outer longitudinal surfaces of the rolls so that the roll surfaces are continuously cleaned before moving into contact with the molten metal in advance of the nip.  
35 One apparatus of this kind is disclosed in Japanese Patent Publication J03230849-A of Nippon Steel Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries KK. In this apparatus two sets of divided roller brushes are applied to the peripheral

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surface of each chilled casting roll with the brushes of one set being staggered with respect to those of the other set to provide a brushing action across the complete width of the casting roll. Japanese Patent Publication J01-083341-A also of Nippon Steel Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries KK also discloses a twin roll caster in which the casting rolls are cleaned by brushes. Japanese Patent Application 29393/97 and 29394/97 of Nippon Steel Corporation disclose roll cleaning arrangements in which two cylindrical cleaning brushes are brought successively into contact with a casting roll at different stages of a casting run. United States Patent 4,793,400 discloses a casting drum cleaner in which a pair of similar rotating brushes are applied in tandem to the drum, both brushes being driven in opposite directions to the rotation of the drum. Other roll brushing arrangements are disclosed in our United States Patents 5,307,861 and 5,575,327.

It has been found that during the start and finish of a casting operation, the casting roll picks up major accretions of contaminants and these can damage the brushing device which must be capable of performing fine cleaning of the casting surface during normal casting. The contaminants can also damage the casting roll surface if they accumulate between the casting rolls and the metal delivery support plate. The present invention provides a brushing device by which a rotary sweeper brush can be brought into engagement with the casting roll surface in advance of a main brush to sweep off such major accretions at least during the start and finish of a casting run.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

There is provided an apparatus for casting metal strip, comprising at least one casting roll, a metal delivery system to deliver molten metal onto the surface of the casting roll and a roll brushing apparatus to clean the roll surface, the brushing apparatus comprising:

at least one brush mounting frame;  
a main brush mounted on one said mounting frame to extend

across the roll and capable of tangentially engaging the peripheral longitudinal roll surface and capable of fine cleaning the casting rolls during the normal casting operation;

5       an elongate rotary sweeper brush mounted on one said mounting frame to extend across the roll and capable of tangentially engaging the peripheral longitudinal roll surface in advance of the main brush capable of sweeping off major accretions which occur near the start and end of a casting run;

10       a sweeper brush actuator on the mounting frame to move the sweeper brush into engagement with the casting roll at the beginning and end of the casting run, and a main brush actuator on the mounting frame to move the main brush into engagement with the casting roll surface at least during normal casting operation.

15       The sweeper brush may be a barrel brush rotatably mounted on a brush mounting structure connected to the brush actuator. The sweeper brush may be mounted independently of the main brush on a separate mounting frame or alternatively may be mounted with the main brush on the same mounting frame. In one embodiment, the sweeper brush may be mounted on the same mounting frame as the main frame but able to move independently of the main brush into and out of engagement with the casting roll. In any event, the main brush and sweeper brush may be positively driven either together or independently of each other. The main brush may be embodied to rotate in either direction relative to the rotation of the casting roll, but usually is embodied to rotate in the same rotational direction of the casting roll. The sweeper brush rotates in the same direction as the casting rolls at a speed higher or lower than the rotational speed of the casting rolls. By rotating in the same direction as the casting rolls, the sweeper brush and main brush are likely to be more effective in cleaning the roll surfaces without scoring the roll surfaces by dragging accretions over the roll surface since the brushes are moving counter to the roll surface at the area of tangential contact with the roll surface.

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The sweeper brush actuator may comprise a fluid cylinder device, and is generally actuated to move the sweeper brush into engagement with the casting roll near the start and end of the casting run, and out of engagement from the casting roll during production casting operation. The main brush actuator moves the main brush into engagement with the casting rolls at least during normal casting operations. The sweeper brush actuator and main brush actuator should move the sweeper brush and main brush such that there is no interruption in sweeping the casting rolls caused by movement of the sweeper brush and the main brush into and out of engagement with the casting rolls. The sweeper brush and main brush actuators provide such engagement of the main brush and sweeper brush with the casting roll surface so that the sweeper and main brushes are efficient in brushing the surface of the casting roll without causing undue scoring or wear to the surface of the casting roll.

The apparatus may further comprise an elongate scraper mounted on one of the brush mounting structures to move in and out with the sweeper brush and to engage the sweeper brush so as to scrape swept material from it.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

In order that the invention may be more fully explained, particular embodiments will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a twin roll caster incorporating a pair of brushing apparatus in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 illustrates one of the brushing apparatus;  
Figure 3 is a front elevation of a main brush of the brushing apparatus;

Figure 4 is a front elevation of a sweeper brush of the brushing apparatus; and

Figure 5 is a front elevation of the sweeper brush in a modified apparatus in which the sweeper brush is positively driven by a drive motor.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICULAR EMBODIMENTS

The embodiments are described with reference to a twin roll caster, but they are not limited to use with twin roll casters. The illustrated twin roll caster comprises a main machine frame 11 which supports a pair of parallel casting rolls 12 of generally textured outer peripheral longitudinal surfaces. Molten metal is supplied during a casting operation from a ladle 13 through a refractory ladle outlet shroud 14 to a tundish 15 and thence through a metal delivery nozzle 16 into the nip 17 between the casting rolls 12. Hot metal thus delivered to the nip 17 forms a pool 10 above the nip and this pool is confined at the ends of the rolls by a pair of side closure or side dam plates 18 which are held against stepped ends of the rolls by actuation of a pair of hydraulic cylinder units (not shown). The upper surface of the pool 10 (generally referred to as the "meniscus" level) may rise above the lower end of the delivery nozzle so that the lower end of the delivery nozzle is immersed within this pool.

Casting rolls 12 are water cooled so that shells solidify on the moving roller surfaces and are brought together at the nip 17 between them to produce a solidified strip product 19 at the roll outlet. This product may be fed, typically with further processing, to a standard coiler (not shown).

The illustrated twin roll caster as thus far described is of the kind which is illustrated and described in some detail in our Australian Patent 631728 and our United States Patent 5,184,668 and reference may be made to those patents for appropriate constructional details which form no part of the present invention.

A pair of roll brushing apparatus denoted generally as 21 is disposed on to each side of the pair of casting rolls such that they can be engaged with the outer peripheral surfaces of the rolls 12 at opposite sides of nip 17 prior to the peripheral surfaces of the casting rolls entering the molten metal delivery system.

Each brushing apparatus 21 comprises a brush frame

20 which carries a main casting roll cleaning brush 22 and a separate sweeper brush 23. Frame 20 comprises a base plate 41 and upstanding side plates 42 on which the main cleaning brush 22 is mounted. Base plate 41 is fitted with slides 43 which are slidable along a track member 44 to allow the frame 20 to be moved toward and away from one of the casting rolls 12 and thereby move the main brush 22 mounted on the frame 20 by operation of the main brush actuator 28. The sweeper brush 23 is mounted on frame 20 to move independently of the main brush 22 by operation of sweeper brush actuator 28A from retracted positions to operative positions in contact with the casting roll, so that either the sweeper brush 23 or the main brush 22, or both, is brushing the casting rolls without interruption in the brushing operation between them.

The main brush 22 is in the form of a cylindrical barrel brush having a central body 45 carried on a shaft 34 and fitted with a cylindrical canopy of wire bristles 46. Shaft 34 is rotatably mounted in bearings 47 in the side plates 42 of frame 20 and a pneumatic drive motor mounted on one of these side plates is coupled to the brush shaft 34 so as to rotatably drive the brush in the same direction as the rotation of the casting roll, as indicated by the arrow 36 in Figure 2. Although the main brush is shown as a cylindrical barrel brush but it should be understood that this brush may take other forms such as the elongate rectangular brush disclosed in United States Patent 307861, the rotary brushing devices disclosed in 5,575,327 or the pivoting brushes of Australian Patent Application P07602. The precise form of the main brush is not critical to the present invention.

The separate sweeper brush 23 is in a form of a cylindrical barrel brush which is mounted on frame 20 so as to be moveable on the frame such that it can be brought into engagement with the casting roll 12 or retracted away from that roll by operation of the sweeper brush actuator 28A independent of whether the main brush is engaged with the casting roll. This enables the sweeper brush 23 to be moved independently of the main brush 22 and brought into operation only during the start and finish of a casting run and be

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withdrawn during normal casting as described below. The  
sweeper brush 23 is rotatably driven in tandem with or  
independently of the main brush 22. The sweeper brush 23 is  
driven in the same direction as the casting rolls at a speed  
different from the speed of the casting rolls. In this way,  
the large accretions that can occur at the start and end of  
the casting run are less likely to be dragged across the roll  
surface and cause scoring of the casting roll surface since  
the sweeper brush is contacting the casting roll surface  
moving in the direction counter to movement of the casting  
roll surface. Although the main brush may be driven in a  
direction counter to the rotation of the casting roll, the  
main brush is usually driven in the same rotational direction  
as the casting rolls.

Sweeper brush 23 has a central body 24 carried on a  
shaft 25 and fitted with a cylindrical canopy of wire  
bristles 26. The barrel brush shaft 25 is rotatably mounted  
in a brush mounting structure 27 which can be moved back and  
forth by operation of quick acting hydraulic cylinders 28 to  
move the barrel brush inwardly against the casting roll 12 or  
to retract it away from the casting roll. The roll mounting  
structure 27 may be in the form of a wide yoke with side  
wings 30 in which the brush shaft 25 is rotatably mounted in  
bearings 31. The barrel brush 23, brush mounting structure  
27 and actuator 28 are carried on the main frame 20 of the  
brushing apparatus 21 so that the sweeper brush will always  
be correctly positioned in advance of the main brush 22. The  
roll mounting structure 27 may carry an elongate scraper  
blade 29 which extends throughout the width of the barrel  
brush 23 and projects into the canopy of bristles 26. Blade  
29 may be made of hardened steel and have a sharp leading  
edge.

Sweeper brush 23 may be rotated purely by  
frictional engagement between its canopy of bristles 26 with  
the casting roll 12 in which case it may be simply rotatably  
mounted between the side plates 42 of frame 20 without any  
drive means as shown in Figure 4. In preferred embodiments  
the sweeper brush 23 is positively driven by provision of a

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pneumatic drive motor 48 as shown in Figure 5.

With the arrangement shown in Figure 4, sweeper brush 23 is biased inwardly against the casting roll 12 by actuation of the cylinder units 28 such that it is rotatably driven by the frictional engagement between the canopy of bristles 26 and the roll surface so that it is rotated in the opposite rotational (same peripheral) direction at the roll surface at the region of its engagement with the roll surface, as indicated by the arrows 32, 33 in Figure 2. The rotation of the sweeper brush 23 is retarded by its inter-engagement with the scraper blade 29 so that the sweeper brush 23 is driven at a slower peripheral speed than the casting roll. The relative speed between the roll and the barrel brush 23 causes effective sweeping action and ensures that the bristles engaging the casting roll will change continuously. The scraper blade 29 also effectively cleans the sweeper brush 23 of contaminating material swept from the casting surface of the roll so that clean bristles are continuously presented to the casting roll surface.

In the preferred embodiments a sweeper brush drive motor 48 is provided as shown in Figure 5, sweeper brush 23 can be positively driven at a fixed speed independent of the speed of the casting roll 12. It will generally be driven so that its bristles travel in the same rotational direction as the surface of the roll 12 but at a different (higher or lower) speed. The rotational speed of the brush can be varied to optimize this speed differential.

Sweeper brush 23 is moved into engagement with the casting roll prior to the start of casting and is moved away from the roll after casting conditions have stabilized. It is moved back into engagement with the roll just prior to termination of the cast. The point at which the casting conditions stabilize, and sweeper brush disengaged from the casting roll, is usually about when the setpoint is reached for the level of the pool 10 of molten metal, and the point at which the sweeper brush reengage is usually about when the setpoint level of the pool 10 is about to drop as the end of the casting run approaches. The sweeper brush serves to



prevent damage to the main brush and the casting roll due to carry over of debris generated on commencement and near termination of the casting run.

Although the invention has been illustrated and described in detail in the foregoing drawings and description with reference to several embodiments, it should be understood that the description is illustrative and not restrictive in character, and that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments. Rather, the present invention covers all variations, modifications and equivalent structures that come within the scope and spirit of the invention. Additional features of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon consideration of the detailed description, which exemplifies the best mode of carrying out the invention as presently perceived. Many modifications may be made to the present invention as described above without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

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